LOADSTAR LETTER

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Bureaucratic BBS

Uncle Sam owns a number of BBSs, a few with 800 numbers. If you have a computer, you might be in a position to influence your congressmen on matters of the deficit and government waste. Or maybe you want to know that's going to be on the next 1040 form before H&R Block. In either case, here is a list of selected government BBSs:

WHISTLEBLOWER / DEFICIT REDUCTION BOARD CONGRESS 202/225-5527, 2400 baud. Anonymous messages can be left about government waste and corruption.

"1040 BBS" INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE 202/927-4180. 2400 baud Electronic filing info and bulletins.

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE BBS CONGRESS 202/226-2818 2400 baud: Deficit reduction recommendations.

CENSUS-BUREAU ELECTRONIC FORUM DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE 301/763-1568 9600 baud 301/763-7554 2400 baud: Mountain of government statistics.

FEDERAL QUALITY INSTITUTE BBS OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT 202/606-4800 2400 baud. Invites citizens to share insight concerning government quality.

CIVIL RIGHTS DIVISION BBS DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE 202/514-6193 2400 baud: Messages, policy statutes.

FEDERAL RESERVE - MINNEAPOLIS FEDERAL RESERVE SYSTEM 612/340-2489 9600 baud. Daily financial data for the nation.

GLOBAL SEISMOLOGY & GEOMAGNETISM ONLINE INFO SYSTEM DEPT OF THE INTERIOR 800/358-2663. 1200 baud Latest info on earthquakes.

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Briwall Closes Doors

Long-time 8-bit turned *Amiga* supporter, *Briwall*, has closed its doors. First reported on *GEnie* in September 1993, the rumor has proven true. The owners of *Briwall* could not be reached for comment. More to follow. ❑

GeoVision Vanishes

GeoVision has ceased publication. Grady Brown, who financed *GeoVision* out of his pocket, can not be reached for comment. Pundits fear that illness or a layoff may have brought the popular *GEOS* publication to an abrupt end. ❑

1351 Mouse Crunch Hits 8-bit World

The 1351 mouse is getting hard to find. You may think you're buying one and actually receive a joystick emulator which can only move in eight directions. The *C-64/128/Amiga/Atari* trackball, available from *Tenex* is also an eight-direction joystick emulator. If you're a *GEOS* user, you may want to snatch up any that you see.

A hardware manufacturer has reported to *LOADSTAR* that they are working on their own 1351 compatible mouse which will move in all directions. At the moment the manufacturer wishes to remain anonymous. ❑

Gazette To Go "Disk Only" In January

What more can be said? *COMPUTE!* will cease publication of a printed *Gazette* for 8-bit users only three short months after dropping its *Amiga* subscription-only magazine. ❑

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Up Close, With John Brown

John Brown is the publisher of *Twin Cities 64/128*, one of the only remaining magazines for the *Commodore* 8-bit line. In this discussion, we find out about the man behind *Parsec, Inc.*

LS: What is your age?

John: Thirty-three, and happily married.

LS: What was your first exposure to computers?

John: *PONG* which was the first video game. I took *FORTRAN* programming in 1976 using the batch system (cards that say "Do not fold, spindle, or mutilate" with holes punched in them) to program some *IBM* system as big as a small room.

LS: How did you progress from that to president of Parsec?

John: After flunking *FORTRAN* because I hated the card system, and the teacher hated my sense of humor, I stuck to being a video game champ until 1985, when a friend gave me a computer he was using for college. I stuck to playing computers instead of programming them.

LS: Video game champ?

John: Yes, I used to play for food at the local sub shops. High score on *ASTEROIDS* usually won a free sub at the end of the day. So I got good at hunting Wally and Beaver and got a free submarine at the end of the day (9pm). I also won the local Aladdin arcade contest for *GALAGA* and such. The longest I played on that was over 8 hours on one quarter. I really like arcade games.

LS: What did you think of *Commodore* computers before you owned one?

John: Nothing much. I can't remember when I first heard of them. My friend gave me a *VIC 20* with a tape drive, monitor, and some games around 1985. After using the *VIC 20* I decided I wanted something I could do word processing on. I wanted to be able to program as well as play games. So I went to the local *Toys Я Us* and picked up all the information sheets on the newest computers, including *Apple, IBM*, and *Atari*. At that time the *C-128* wasn't available but the specs looked interesting. So I read all the magazines and decided a few months later the flat C-128 looked like the best buy. I was so anxious to get one that I bought the first available one from a local dealer I found about 20 miles away. I still think the C-128 was the best 8-bit computer ever made.

LS: What motivated you to start Parsec?

John: My local dealer kept trying to sell me *IBM* products when I wanted *Commodore* products. I could find no other local support otherwise I wouldn't have bought my first 1571 from him either. Eventually this ticked me off. Around the winter of 1985 I decided to start *Parsec* and incorporated *Parsec* in September of 1986.

LS: How many people work at *Parsec*?

John: Six people, counting part time employees, not counting the *Commodore 64/128 RT* staff and *TC-128/64* staff.

LS: What was your first product?

John: A public domain software catalog produced with a *C-1520 pen/plotter* using my flat *C-128* and 1571. Later ones were produced using *The Printshop* and a 1525 printer.

LS: How would you describe *Twin Cities*?

John: The best printed publication for the *Commodore 128* and now the *C-64*, since January 1986.

LS: How did you acquire *Twin Cities*?

John: I was printing a new catalog and was about to start a *C-128* magazine when *Loren Luvhaug* put the "feelers" out on *Q-link* about looking for a buyer. The magazine was dead, no refunds were being offered, it was the end of the line for the magazine and many owed products or money, including authors, were out in the cold. So "officially" it was bought in June/July 1991 but it was not transferred to *Parsec* until the end of summer 1991.

LS: There seems to be much confusion about the nature of the publication. Is it monthly, quarterly, bi-monthly?

John: There is not much confusion from people that were owed subscriptions. *Parsec* has been printing *TC-128* (now *TC-128/64*) from *Parsec* profits and averaged 3 issues a year (Sept 1991 - Sept 93 - six issues #29-34). Break even point was/is issue #35. It is now (with Nov 93) a bi-monthly. People should also remember *Parsec* took a dead 24-28 page magazine, honored all subscriptions for the people that wanted them, expanded it to 56 pages, added a companion disk, and increased the page size well over 50%, *plus* increased the already high quality. It took a lot of money, a lot of time, and a lot of faith.

LS: What's the future for *Twin Cities?*

John: A steady publishing schedule, expanding the magazine beyond the large 56 page tabloid format, and greatly expanding the number of subscribers. We plan on doing *Commodore* projects until at least January 1996. We have always tried to satisfy the hardware hacker and heavy duty user with hardware projects and lots of source code. It has been a *TC-128* trademark since in 1986. My main concern is keeping it a high quality content publication.

LS: How did you get started as sysop on *GEnie's* Flagship?

John: I was asked to become the manager of *GEnie's Commodore RoundTable* because I was active in the market and a market leader. I was "asked" in August 1992 when the other head sysop wanted to spend more time with his job and *IBM* type things. I originally got started as a RTC host and category

leader. The proposal was a complete surprise.

LS: You get things done quickly on *GEnie*. How much are you online?

John: I am online 50-120 hours a month. It varies by the month. Though the reason things get done so fast is because I have an excellent staff that does the majority of the work. I learned the hard way I can not and should not do the majority of the work. *GEnie* also makes it very easy for managers and sysops to do their jobs by providing the needed tools and an open atmosphere. Though the real lesson for me was you are only as good as the people that surround you.

LS: Are you online elsewhere?

John: Yes, but not enough to make it worth mentioning. *GEnie* is the only network *Parsec* uses to provide support.

LS: What's your opinion of *Qlink's* slow demise? Mind you this is public speech!

John: Yea, I don't want to fund the "needed" repairs with a libel suit! I predicted it in July 1991 when I resigned from my assistant graphic sysop position on *Qlink*. I also turned down the head sysop position for the hardware section, because of it. My opinion is I am not surprised and I now predict they will either kill the network January 1994 or do something with it.

LS: Oh no! Not another "End of the world in 1994" prediction!

John: I don't think you will ever see *Qlink* in a healthy state, with file downloads, again. Its time came and went in the 80s. I think it will be RIP January 1994, though this is only pure speculation of course. It's too bad, even as a *GEnie* sysop I would have liked to see it stay healthy. Its demise will be a blow to the *Commodore* market and it didn't have to happen that way.

LS: Any projects on the horizon?

John: Yes, three hardware products and many books and software packages. Starting December 1993 through January 1996 we will be releasing about one a month. But, I have learned to keep my mouth shut until they are ready to sell.

LS: Are you a *64er* or a *128er?*

John: A *C-128* user! I use *C-64* mode but not for any productivity related reasons, unless it is to test software for a review. Using the *C-128* for 80 column productivity software is the main reason I bought one in 1985.

LS: What concerns do you have as a *C-128* user?

John: That piracy by individuals and user groups will kill all the remaining support, including ours.

LS: You seem to be a very motivated individual. Do you live a theme?

John: Actually I have four posted by the computers at home and work that I live by:

a. Ten Percent.

b. Success is the best revenge.

c. Imagination is more important than knowledge.

d. Have a nice day.

LS: Ten percent? Don't you mean 100% or 110%?

John: I try to give 10% of all income/profits to charity each year. When I'm about ready to throw in the towel, I keep in the back of my mind about how my worst day probably is going to be better than the single best day for the majority of the world's population. Knowing you are working to make money for someone that can't can be a powerful factor in how hard you work. I always keep a picture of each kid I have sponsored through CCF in the back of my mind (and wallet) and sometimes it has meant the difference between telling some customer to "jump off a bridge" or putting up with them while I take their money.

LS: What is CCF?

John: *Christian Children's Fund.* Over 90% of the money taken in goes to the children or village and isn't wasted on administration overhead. I picked this one on the basis of how it is run and what it does, not because of religious orientation.

LS: Favorite quotation?

John: I heard it from a Dr. Who tape (I'm a Dr. Who fan big time) called "The Five Doctors." I also repeated the quote at my mother's grave: *"One day I shall come back. Yes,I shall come back. Until then there must be no regrets, no tears, no anxieties. Just go forward in all your beliefs and prove to me I was not mistaken in mine."*

LS: Who has influenced you the most?

John: My mother and family (and Irving Gould to some extent.

LS: What's your product line?

John: Hmmm .... are you ready for a long list? We sell magazines, books, software, hardware, and services relating to computers. *TC-128/64* is our main product now. It is the best printed publication for the *C-128/64*. I understand there are some excellent German magazines so I limit this to the English language. We give a free issue #33 to anyone that wants it. We do *GEnie's Commodore 64/128 RoundTable*, the best place to be online for *Commodore 64/128* owners. *RamDos 128*, A book all about Commodore's REUs and the *RamDos 128* product, including disassembled and commented code.

We sell past issues of reprinted *TC-128/64* material. Public Domain software (we have everything). *geoPager 128*, a way to print multiple *geoPaint* documents from a list in any order and in any multiple. Real handy and written by Robert Knop. We also have a *geoPager* 64 version. Cost is $9.95 plus S&H. *Bellterm C-64*, a *C-64* terminal program by Ed Bell. *GEOS Font*

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Government BBSs Continued

AGRICULTURE FORUM LIBRARY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE 301/504-5496, 301/504-6510, 301/504-5111 301/504-5497 All 2400 baud: Ag info, activities, 4-H.

CLIMATE DIALUP SERVICE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE 301/899-1174 9600 baud 301/899-1173 2400 baud: Climate data for anywhere.

COAST GUARD GPS INFO CENTER DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION 703/313-5910 9600 baud: Radio navigation data, messages, time differences data.

CONSULAR AFFAIRS BBS DEPARTMENT OF STATE 202/647-9225 9600 baud: Travel advisories, passport / visa info.

ECONOMIC BULLETIN BOARD DEPT OF COMMERCE 202/482-2584 9600 baud 202/482-3870 2400 baud Press releases, labor statistics, etc.

EPA BBS ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY 919/541-5742 9600 baud Master gateway to 10 EPA BBSs.

FEDERAL REGISTER ELECTRONIC NEWS DELIVERY NATIONAL ARCHIVES 202/275-0920 2400 baud 202/275-1538 2400 baud. Lists federal laws (summaries, not entire texts).

FEDIX FEDERAL INFO EXCHANGE 800/783-3349 9600 baud 301/258-0953 9600 baud Programs, grants, scholarships for colleges.

FEMA HAZARDOUS MATERIALS INFO EXCHANGE FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY 708/972-3275 9600 baud. Info on hazardous materials.

HUD NEWS AND EVENTS BBS DEPT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT 202/708-3562. 2400 baud News items and archives.

JPL BBS JET PROPULSION LABORATORY 818/354-1333. 9600 baud. Space archives, GIF files, space related software.

LABOR NEWS DEPT OF LABOR 800/597-1221 202/219-4784 2400 baud Labor statistics.

MINORITY IMPACT BBS DEPT OF ENERGY 202/586-1561 2400 baud Announcement of opportunities for minority companies.

NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION BBS NASA 301/286-9000, 301/286-9500. 2400 baud Access to many astronomical files kept by NASA.

NUTRITION DATABANK DEPT OF AGRICULTURE 301/436-5078, 2400 baud. Up-to-date info on food composition. ❑

LOADSTAR FORUM & GEnie Chit Chat

Genie Message From J.Jones36,

Not everyone uses *GEOS*. Of those that do, a substantial number refuse to upgrade. When we do *GOES 2.0* only stuff, we get letters from people who can't get the product to work because they have 1.3 and earlier versions. Then we not only have to support our product, but *GEOS*, too. And yes, we have gotten flak from tape users and *GEOS* haters. Many of our users have one C-64, one 1541, a TV and little else. That includes software *(GEOS)*. Sometimes that same user wants every block of the 2000 blocks on each issue to be relevant to them. They don't have *GEOS*, then *GEOS* shouldn't be on the disk. While most of our readers realize that we're a software digest with something for everyone, we have to calm the fires of those who feel that there's too much *GEOS* on *LOADSTAR*.

GEnie message from R.KNOP1,

You get flak for publishing *GEOS* stuff? Come now, people, *GEOS* is about as standard as it gets when you go beyond what was included in the box. Heck, people gotta have a 1541 or 1571 to use any of your programs- why no flak from tape drive users? (Please don't answer this question, it is a rhetorical question for illustrative purposes, trust me, I know the answer.)

Once upon a time, *GEOS* was called the "new official" operating system for the *C-64*. A load of baloney, of course, since the old ROM OS was hardly thereafter eschewed, but nonetheless, *GEOS* may well be the most widespread piece of software.

Probably just sour grapes from folks who don't like *GEOS*. I betcha you'd get more flak if you made it a policy not to publish *GEOS* stuff.

GEnie message from C128.JBEE,

Every issue I get mail about publishing *CP/M*, or *GEOS*, or anything else. There is always that certain percentage that will never be happy and will always find something wrong. Though, I can see the tendency for a disk based publication to get more complaints of that nature since they expect original programming on the disk that they can use. I imagine for every data file that is not directly runnable from the *C-64* or *C-128* they get dozens of complaints.

GEnie message from G.NOGGLE,

You can't make everyone happy at anytime for groups of people numbering more than one. Of course this is my batch of sour grapes. Wedding plans EEECh (off topic of course).

GEnie message from R.KNOP1,

Greg, congratulations in advance. Jeff, what percentage of *Commodore* owners would you estimate own *GEOS*? Were I to make off the cuff guesses, I would guess that 3/4 of *C-64/128* owners have some form of *GEOS* (be it 1.2, 1.3, or 2.0; 64 or 128). I would guess that about 1/2 of *C-64/128* owners use GEOS now and again- i.e., rather rarely. I would guess that something like 1/6 to 1/4 use *GEOS* relatively regularly.

How far off base am I on these? Am I way overestimating GEOS usage because I'm a *GEOS* programmer?

Curious, was thought ever given to doing a GEOS *LOADSTAR*? That way there would be three versions: *C-64, C-128*, and *GEOS*. I am not suggesting this now- don't know if it would be worth it for you to try to start up a new publication at this point- just curious as to whether you ever thought about it.

Re: *GEOS 1.3* vs. *GEOS 2.0*, people really ought to upgrade to *GEOS 2.0*, it's much nicer. Plus, you get *geoWrite 2.1*, which is better than *geoWrite 1.3*.

GEnie message from J.Jones36,

We jump at the rare *GEOS* program. Clip art takes up a lot of room. Fonts don't seem to bother anyone, but we get a lot of calls when the font is too big for *geoPaint* or if the work disk already has the maximum number of fonts. Still *GEOS* is very popular, and *LOADSTAR* must support it.

GEnie message from CMD-DOUG,

Greg,I'd have to say your guess is *very* high. I'd put those who even use *GEOS* occasionally at less than 10%, with maybe around 2 or 3 percent actually using it often.

I would also think, though, that the percentage of *LOADSTAR* readers that use *GEOS*, either occasionally or regularly, is probably higher because *GEOS* users tend to be more active in purchasing, be that magazines, programs, hardware, whatever. There is a very large number of Commodore users that are simply totally disconnected from the rest of us. They don't read the magazines, don't buy anything new, don't belong to user groups. They pretty much are satisfied with what they have and use it, and for the most part ignore whatever may be going on elsewhere. I welcome any comments, rebuttals, name-calling or curses.

Doug Cotton
CMD

GEnie message from B.GANN1,

I agree with most of that, Doug, but not the part about the people ignoring what is going on. Many just don't know. They got the computer at a garage sale and have no idea on how to find out about it. As to flak on *GEOS* stuff, I personally do not use *GEOS*. It is fine to have it in a magazine or disk though. I do not expect all of a magazine to be stuff I am interested in. But I also do not expect to find 1/2 of the mag to be dedicated to *GEOS* and *CP/M*, which I consider to be a small segment of the population of users. I know there are lots out there that use *GEOS* (no hate email please) but there are also lots that do not. This is not a slam to *LOADSTAR*, as I have actually never seen an issue. I only have 1 issue of *TC 128*, so I can't really comment on that either. I think the

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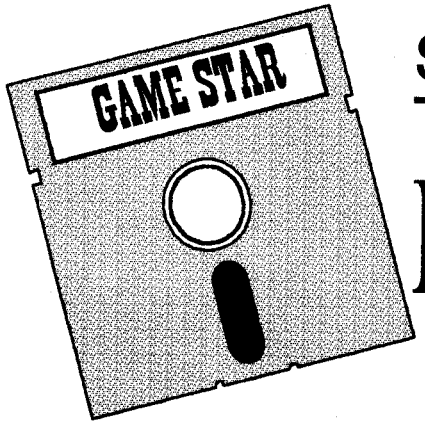

Software Excitement From The Pages Of...

LOADSTAR

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GEOPOWER TOOLS - 19 Geos utilities: Calendar Printer, Fast Format, Geo Fetch (grab any portion of a screen as a Photo Scrap), Phoenix (resurrect a trashcanned file), Programmer's Calculator are just a few of the handy tools. Side Two is filled with Clip Art (in Photo Album format) and fonts. **$19.95 (C-64/128) Item #080525**

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LNF113

most important thing is to try to watch yourselves. Don't devote a large page count to something unless you know your readers are mostly interested in it. No one should complain about 2 pages of *GEOS* in a 40 page magazine. But I think they have a right to if it is 20 pages, and it was not advertised as mainly *GEOS*.

Brenda

GEnie message from R.KNOP1,

Re: *GEOS* usage estimate, well, OK, I was just guessing. Optimistic guesses, I suppose. Brenda is right in that a magazine that does not advertise itself as a primarily *GEOS* magazine should not be 1/2 *GEOS* stuff. One probably doesn't want to assign strict quotas of how much stuff of what type there should be, though. First, you have to integrate it over several issues, rather than looking at one issue (nothing wrong with a "*SPECIAL GEOS ISSUE*" every 10 issues or whatever). Second, while yes, you have to base it on what your readers want, you should also base it on what is out there. If there is exciting stuff happening in *GEOS*, then there should be coverage there, even if it sucks down a greater percentage of the magazine than there are *GEOS* users in the readership. Not basing your coverage on what is out there can be bad in two ways: one, you might miss something interesting that should have been published due to "over quota" considerations, and two you might fall victim to filling the magazine with gratuitous fluffy articles simply to satisfy the feeling that there ought to be more articles of a certain type out there.

All very theoretical though. What it fundamentally comes down to is that if people like *TC-128/64*, or *LOADSTAR*, or whatever, they will keep subscribing. I if not, not. Personally, it's been a while since the previous issue of *TC128*, but IMHO, it was worth the wait

GEnie message from TOM.PATCH,

I just received issue #112. *LOADSTAR* is like that bunny it keeps getting better and better. Keep up the good work guys! Now for my question. I used geoViewer to look at the *Jurassic Clip Park*, the pics were very good. But when I selected the print option on a *STAR NX-1000C*, I only got 2/3 ? of the pic. Is the *NX-1000C* a 60dpi printer or is there another reason? Maybe a dip switch?

GEnie message from G.CORREA,

On the *Star NX-1000C*, if memory serves (it usually doesn't, so check me) DIP switch #5 switches into full *EPSON*, 80dpi mode. A friend has his set that way and it works just like my *Star NX1000 Rainbow* with the *SuperGrafx Jr*, but without the hassle of the interface. Of course, he doesn't get color either, though.

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Six Steps To Getting Published

by Rev. Dave Moorman

There's one big secret that those published on *LOADSTAR* hold close to their hearts:

1. ***Write!*** One would be amazed at how many would-be writers never get past this step.

2. ***Finish*** what you write. This weeds the rest of us out, doesn't it?

3. ***Edit*** to the supplied requirements of the purchasing editor. You may know better, but they're writing the check. Humor them.

4. ***Mail*** it or the editor will never see it!

5. ***Keep mailing*** it! That rejection slip only means that one editor did not need your work this time.

6. ***Revise*** it. Consider any comments in a rejection letter. It probably contains suggestions that would make your submission acceptable. ❑

John Brown Continued From Page 3

Guide, a printed guide to our 28 GEOS font disks. *Clipart Guide*, a printed guide to our 28 clipart disks in *GEOS* or *Printshop Side A* format. *CS-DOS* and *ARC* for the *C-128* and *C-64*. A freely distributable shareware program for the C-128 and C-64 that lets you compress PRG and SEQ files for either storage or for a transfer over telephone lines to a BBS. *The SIDplayer Book* by *Compute!* We also have bought the rights to a lot of other software we will be releasing over time soon such as Kent Smotherman's programs (*Twin Feats*) among others. A real list with prices and such would take too much room in an interview.

LS: How should people contact you?

John: People can contact *Parsec* on *GEnie* by using the Email address, JBEE. My *internet* address is C128.JBEE@GENIE.GEIS.COM

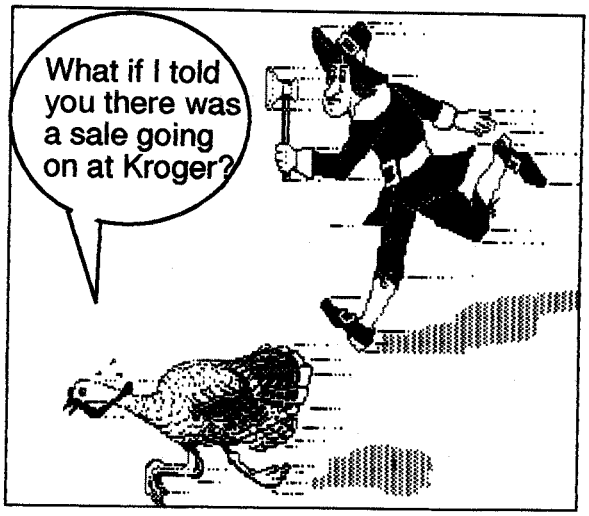
PARSEC, INC.
PO BOX 111
SALEM, MA 01970-0111
USA

GEnie message from G.PYSKA,

I ordered *LOADSTAR* monthly & *LOADSTAR QUARTERLY* in 3.5" disk format like it was suggested. The lady on the other end of the phone said it isn't offered. Will it be offered soon or was I led astray? I'm just wondering what's going on that's all.

LS: We're very close to offering 1581 service for *LOADSTAR 64* and *LOADSTAR 128 Quarterly*. Within a couple of months I think the system wilil be ready. Our commercial copiers didn't recognize 1581 disks. When the company that made the copiers said that the copiers could recognize "*Commodore*" disks, they meant *Amiga* disks. So Fender mailed the company for 1581 formatted disks and they have been working on a driver for our copiers.

Again, all people without 1581s will continue to receive 1541 disks! There will be *no* price increase! You will only receive 3.5 inch disks when you request a 3.5 inch subscription. It's really close now. If the mass copiers aren't ready by January, Fender and I will buy an extra 1581 or two to copy the disks manually. *No kidding!* ❑



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Classified Ads

LOADSTAR CLASSIFIEDS are 45 cents per word up to $25, in which case the ad becomes a 2-inch boxed ad, like the Clip Art Cupboard ad below. If you prefer the boxed ad, include a rough (but legible) sketch. Layout is free. For classifieds, name, address and phone number are free. No minimum. If you've got some hardware to sell or buy, or someone you want to meet, this is a way to get the word out.

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- **1571 Disk Boa:** Squeeze your 1571 5.25" DS/DD Disks into convenient backup files (That means both sides folks.)
- **1581 Disk Boa:** Squeeze those big 1581 3.5" DS/DD Disks into convenient backup files.
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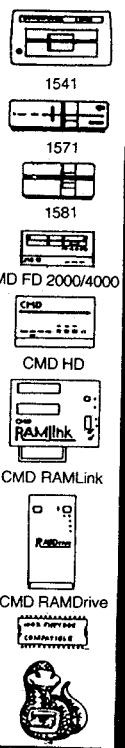

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